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## Book Pricing Update

Celia Wagner  
*Blackwell*

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# Book Pricing Update

## Imprint Date versus Publication Date: A Truly Loose Association

by Celia Wagner (Blackwell)

**I**n newly-published books, the imprint date, or copyright date, corresponds only loosely to the actual year of publication. The following graph and chart illustrate this correspondence.

We surveyed 1,200 titles covered on Blackwell North America's Approval program during calendar 1991—one hundred titles chosen at random from each month. Grouped by imprint (1990 or earlier, 1991, or 1992), the numbers reveal that while most titles published in 1991 sport a 1991 imprint, a large minority do not.

In January and February, only 36 percent of newly-published titles show the current year's imprint. After that, the percentage of current-year imprints rises steeply, peaking in July and August, at 82.5%. Also at mid-year, titles with next year's imprint begin to arrive, so that by November and December, fully 14% of new titles display the imprint of the year to come. (Note: Titles in this survey were not "on order" with publishers, but actually published and reviewed by Blackwell. All were reviewed "book in hand" on the dates cited.)

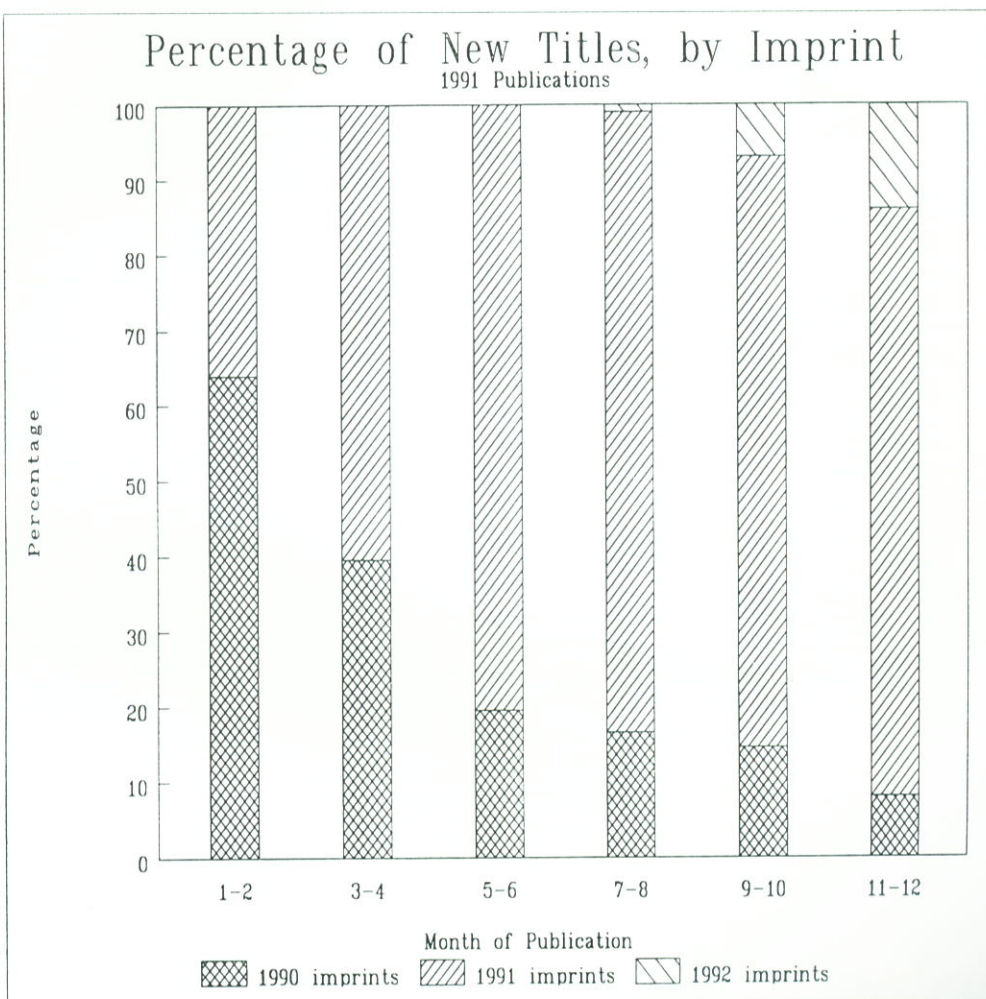
While it seems odd for 1992 imprints to begin arriving in July, 1991, they do, and we have noted these "premature" imprints for over ten years. The first harbinger of the year to come has invariably appeared by August.

The loose association between imprint year and publication date can prove more than an interesting footnote. Libraries switching vendors, beginning Approval coverage for the first time in a new subject area, or trying to conserve funds by reviewing only the "newest" titles, sometimes fix upon imprint year as the deciding factor, e.g.: the vendor should supply titles with an imprint of 1992 or later, while the library (or another vendor) will research

(or supply) titles with earlier imprints. Behind this reasoning lies the belief that titles with previous-year imprints are "old"—they must have been available for some time, though the vendor has been slow to cover them.

It simply isn't so; brand new titles will appear throughout the year, bearing an imprint from the previous year. If imprint date is the toggle for switching vendors, books from the old vendor will continue trickling into the library for up to

a year, and possibly more, after the "switch" has been made. Blackwell recommends, instead, that Approval coverage start, stop, or switch upon a given date, for all titles treated from that date onward, regardless of imprint. If a library fears that titles will be missed because of an abrupt switch (the new vendor treated the titles before the switch, but the old vendor has not treated them yet), the new vendor should provide a backrun list of recently-treated books which would have matched the profile, had it been active sooner. ☛



**Imprint Dates vs. Publication Dates**  
1991 titles  
Percentage of New Titles with a Given Imprint

Month Imprint	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	11-12
1990	64.0	39.5	19.5	16.5	14.5	8.0
1991	36.0	60.5	80.5	82.5	78.5	78.0
1992	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	7.0	14.0